

Hell on Wheels

Golfers, and golfing equipment . . . it was everywhere, on tea towels, plates, cups, in pictures and two lamp bases filled with brightly colored tees, the chandelier made of old irons. Everything contrasted perfectly with the carpeting, the exact shade of an original Scottish Highland green, from the books and magazines on the table, to the golfing caricature swinging from the coo-coo clock pendulum that displayed a new character in bright plaid and various golf swings on the hour, crying out “fore” with the sound of a good hard whack.

The decor was the same throughout the luxury condo: golfers on the shower curtain and towels, holding toothbrushes, and into the bedroom, onto the duvet and even the man’s pajamas. Those particular golfers swayed in a sea of bright yellow silk plaid, stretching with morning calisthenics. The news from the golfing channel gave the weather report, brought to you by Paradise Acres Premium Golfing Community - where the green is always green, and the living is a hole in one.

Holtz Fargenfutter finished his morning stretches with a bend forward and back. Had to keep the body in shape. He pitied the fools who dropped dead on the green, unable to finish their rounds. There was nothing worse than not finishing a round of his most beloved golf.

Today was going to be the big day. Today he would score his age of 70 and reach for him a pinnacle. Stretching more as he walked Holtz wandered into the living room and to his shrine. Encased in oak and glass were his prized objects, trophies, ribbons, and certificates. Most revered was a photo of him with Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods, their signatures in the lower corners, alone worth more than gold.

His eyes caught but paid no attention to the flash of mottled green and grey outside his window. It wasn’t unusual to see a golfer’s errant ball in his backyard, or one of the neighbor’s grandkids. Instructing some of the younger fellows in bettering their swing was a thrill that he didn’t usually miss out on, but not today. Today he had his own games to see to.

Resolute in the beginning and culmination of today, he began stripping from his pajamas, pausing long enough to stand in front of his bathroom's door length mirror. Not bad, not bad at all, for being the big 7-0 today. Muscle could still be seen. No longer lithe and lean, but it was there. There was only the barest hint of a stomach paunch, which he rapidly sucked in. Once dark hair, still lush and shiny and not receding, thank goodness, had turned an almost perfect shade of distinguished silver, not grey, but silver. Bright blue eyes still held their twinkle, and fortunately for him, time and stress had not caused him an influx of wrinkles and sagging skin. Yep, for an old geezer he looked pretty good.

Harsh metal against wood, rapping in stuttered ferocity, an object banged at his front door. What now? Of all days, today was the day he wanted people to leave him alone. Today was his birthday and he'd be pushing up daisies before he let anything ruin today's beautiful outing and foray into the finest sport alive.

The peephole with its tiny, obscure fish eye lens displayed the worst sight possible, his neighbor from three doors down, and not far enough away, Gladys Cravitz. The woman was the biggest gossip in the known and unknown world, and the most insane. Most days he could imagine the big dome of silver tin foil on her head and proclaiming her people were coming to take her away, and if it wasn't aliens, then vampires or some such nonsense. The crazy, old bat belonged in a home, and not disturbing the beautiful, peaceful morning that was his birthday. Deciding the best case scenario was ignore, ignore, ignore. In time, she would go away, her bursitis giving in, or her aliens called her away.

Holtz blared the bathroom radio with a classic rock station in hopes of again checking the perfect, yet unpredictable Miami weather. Music and pounding water would block out any determination by nosy, insane neighbors.

With the radio blasting he sang slightly off key to the music of his beloved mid-life years. For a while those years were when a hot red corvette, and a pretty girl in the seat beside him, were almost as much fun as the game he'd built his life around. Rapidly as he showered, Holtz's mind went over every possible scenario in his swing, the slice of the ball, and the glory as it sailed through the air, a meteor in supreme flight searching for that perfect hole-in-one.

With the soothing beat of the triple-powered massaging heads of water rushing in his ears, Holtz strained to hear the radio. There should be enough time to finish before hearing the weather report. With any luck he'd have time to get in a full round before lunch, and one after, before a drop of rain fell. There would be no typical Miami thunderstorm and deluge, not today, not when he was going to pull off a score of 70 today. A quick snap shut, and a squeaky turn to shut the faucets and the metal hinge of the shower door were the only things beside the final strains of Pink Floyd's "The Wall" to break the silence. The shuffling of

toweling, followed by a contented sigh. Gladys was gone, along with her incessant pounding and the ability to ruin his day. That damn woman was a menace.

Wrapping the grey bath sheet around his middle, Holtz grabbed a smaller towel, both emblazoned with embroidered golf clubs, and began rubbing vigorously at his wet silver hair. Nothing felt better than a hot shower to start the day, and just in time for the weather.

“Today’s weather report is brought to you by Paradise Acres Golfing Community, where the green is always green, and the living is a hole in one.”

Feeling the sneer, he barely managed to contain the growl as the slogan hit his ears. For the price paid for these blasted condos you would think they could come up with a better slogan. Next they would introduce a blasted gopher as a mascot, or worse a gator, in plaid. The yahoos at the front office wouldn’t know class if it came up and bit them on the kisser.

“Miami, Florida is showing nothing but bright sunshine all day, and a balmy 90 for this morning. As expected, there is a 20 percent chance of a brief thunderstorm and deluge late this afternoon, followed by more sun well into the evening. Be sure to keep the pest spray handy, those mosquitoes are going to be killers today. The rest of the week looks like today, sun, a little rain, and more sun. This is Sharon Stormer reporting for WRMI, all rock Miami Beach and Good Morning Miami.”

Clicking off the radio and whistling while he worked, Holtz pulled his favorite golfing togs out of the closet and got dressed. After the requisite polishing of the cleats, he was ready to go and face his birthday in the best way possible, a round of golf, followed by . . . another round of golf.

With all lights, TV, and radio off, Holtz still whistled as he made his way out to the garage. Turning on the lights, he stared at his baby and smiled. She was his beauty, his baby, and more prized than the pristine classic Porsche roadster parked next to her. Seating himself, he turned over the engine, the rumble energizing and even better than the birthday present to himself that he was anxious to pick up at the pro-shop.

There was only one stop to make before the happy part of his day would begin, a quick breakfast and coffee at the clubhouse, and to unwrap his new baby full of gleam metal and leather. So far the day was turning out rather beautiful.

The five minute drive to the clubhouse and pro shop was met with birds chirping and the Miami sun hitting his face, as if heaven itself was shining just for his day. There was no doubt about it, today would be the best game of his life, and he would let nothing stand in the way.

Pulling into the closest space, he was happy to see that at 7:00 a.m., there were not as many people inside, and they milled around the TV, and appearing deep in conversation. Some friends nodded and said good morning, more wished him a happy birthday.

“Morning, Mr. Fargenfutter. Guess what I’ve got for you?” Holtz felt his day get brighter, and not only because Timothy was the only one to ever pronounce his last name correctly.

“Wonderful. Are they ready to go?” The green was calling him now more than before.

“Head in for your breakfast and I’ll have everything ready for you by the time you’re done.” The kid, smiled as he shooed him politely away and into the dining room.

Twenty minutes later, very light in his step, with his stomach now taken care of and a hazelnut latte in hand, Holtz made his way through the growing morning crowd into the pro shop. Tim was helping another customer so he waited while checking the dates on the upcoming summer tournaments. His name appeared listed on every competition for the rest of the year.

“Sorry about that, Sir.” Tim lifted the package onto the counter and opened it carefully for Holtz’s perusal.

There sitting in front of him in gleaming, silver, gold and leather was a set of Majesty Prestigio irons. The \$7000 set left a nice, and very pleasant hole in the bank. They were beautiful and some of the best in the world. With these babies today, his game was sure to be his best. If he wasn’t in such a crowded place, he just might cry. Not even his daughter was this beautiful when she was born. He loved his child, but today, Holtz Fargenfutter loved golf more.

“If I may be so blunt, Sir. You might not want to use these today. There have been several reports of gators on the green. Animal Rescue has been called in, but they can’t make it until this afternoon. We’ve requested that everyone stay off the green for their own safety.” Turning his back to Tim for a second he stared out over the perfect rolling green, giddiness spreading throughout his limbs to be out there and swinging away. Not even a few gators was going to mess up this lovely day.

“I’ll keep that in mind, Son.” Holtz went to retrieve the clubs only to find them in a brand-new bag with a bright red ribbon wrapped around the middle.

“The caddies and I chipped in, Sir. You are always great with us, and the best tipper here. Happy Birthday.”

Twenty minutes later he was well into the game of his life. Four strokes under par and flying high as a kite. Each stroke perfectly on speed, air velocity, and distance. Games just didn’t get better than this. Breathing deep he couldn’t keep the smile of his face, or the swing out of his step as he retrieved the ball from the hole. No gators so far, indeed it was a good day. The threat of impending creature infestation had taken all players off the field and left him a green all to his own. No wait time, no midmorning blitzed mid-life crisis junkies, it was heaven on earth. Hell, he’d tee off a snarling gator if it kept him this much under par.

It wasn't until he was closing in on the third tee that the day started to turn to manure – nasty, murky, dark, manure.

Holtz cranked the steering wheel of the custom four-seat golf cart. Emblazoned in metallic gold on the back panel was “Hell on Wheels.” It was the perfect slogan for someone who drove like a maniac. Barely missing near-blind Gladys Cravitz, who'd wandered onto the green . . . again, the cart careened to the left. Evidently bugging him this morning wasn't enough. She'd tracked him down to the third tee. What in the sam hill was she doing all the way out here anyway. Darn her hide. He hated the woman. Unfortunately, a dead body on his green would just be rife with questions and police and . . . Oh hell!

“Awoogha.”

The horn blared, startling the old woman into gripping her shiny silver walker harder. Feet, clad in fuzzy pink bunny slippers, shuffled to a stop, the atrocious pink ears, bobbing up and down as if on springs.

Morning's first rays caught the metallic paint, the very color of fire and flashed bright into Holtz's eyes, burning his retinas and making him see stars and some paparazzi of flash bulbs. Red leather seats embroidered in orange and gold flames were already close to parboiling in the Miami heat as Holtz sharpened the steering wheel to miss a tree.

With his behind feeling half-baked and his eyes blinking rapidly, he narrowly missed the first tree, but not the next one.

“Ca-thunk.”

Brought up and down hard, the cart's steering wheel was lost in misdirection as impact sounded with a sharp smack. Listing to one side, the back wheel found purchase while the front passenger side hit air, and kept spinning. Damn it all to sassafras, some drunk moron left their bag on the green, and just near his first tee.

Morning started out beautiful, and then to be blunt, turned to shit. Rolling his eyes, the beloved cart's wheels sped in midair, Holtz wondered how such a bright, beautiful day could go so horribly wrong.

Gladys as fast as her shuffling bunnies and walker could take her, covered the ten yards to the back of the cart. Her bug-eyed spectacles saw two shapes on the ground. It was the moaning that caught the most attention, her ears were still sharp as ever, though with her hearing aid on high, they should be. Pulling out the little box, she adjusted the little round indented button to near-deafening.

“You've got something stuck under you, Harry, moaning quite a bit if your driving is any indication.”

“My name is not Harry.” A flurry of hands was brushing grass and sand off hot pink and lime green plaid golfing shorts, as trickles of sweat rolled down Holtz's neck. Why did he not choose Phoenix over Miami to retire in? At least the heat in Phoenix was dry and not

this soggy, swamp of mosquitoes, nosy critters, and Gladys Cravitz. The woman's voice, yet again misnaming him, made Ethel Merman's Edith Bunker sound like Ella Fitzgerald.

"You've still got something under you, and by the sound of it, he's still got some life left in him."

Rolling aged blue eyes, he bent his head and with a pristine white cleat, nudged the body coming into view with the morning light.

"Hey Buddy, you all right?"

"Unhhh" Guttural, long, and eerie, the moan filled the silence just as a strong, clammy, mottled grey fleshy hand wrapped around Holtz's left ankle. It pulled with force.

"AHHH!" The scream was heard on the ninth hole as its owner pulled away with force unknown even to him. The scream was followed with fleshy pops and wet sickening tearing of flesh.

Even as he danced, the fleshy hand gripped his ankle tightly, now separated from its owner, who took no notice of the missing appendage, other than to moan louder and struggle with the weight of the golf cart holding him down.

Falling to his rump and crab crawling backward, the other obstacle to stop him was the spring of the flag that marked the course's third tee. It bounced, buoyed and knocked Holtz in back of the head with a snap.

His eyes took in the whole sight as Gladys, moved or rather inched forward. The tennis balls on the ends of her walker, sliding through the chemically enhanced green grass, staining them with streaks of forest green. One tie-died ball reached forward and nudged the mass under "Hell on Wheels."

"Hey, Harry! I think you hit a zombie. Isn't that exciting?" The mass moaned as Gladys chortled, hitting it again, and again with her walker.

"A what?" No, the old woman was now insane along with a near blind, half deaf, and a plain old barmy nuisance.

"A zombie, you know one of the living dead. Haven't you ever watched a horror movie?" Bursting with excitement, Holtz's fiendish neighbor started nudging the creature again, her glee too apparent.

"Can't say as I have? How do you know it's . . . whatever you called it?" Using the cleat on his right foot, he began scrapping the hand off his left ankle. The bugger was strong, keeping a death grip on its prize. Mindless eye sockets focused on one thing, his face and it scared the bejeepers out of him. Anything was better than staring into lifeless, yet far from dead eyes.

"A zombie, Harry, Z-O-M-B-I-E. They are dead, yet living. Usually they have a taste for brains, but it seems this one just has a taste for you. Go figure."

Gladys's sarcasm was lost on Holtz as he frantically scraped at the thing that was sending shivers down his clammy, sweat soaked spine.

"And just how do you know this?" The cleats accomplished one task, puncturing holes into the too ripe flesh, leaving tendrils of ooze, now soaking into his hot pink, and lime argyle socks.

"Horror movies help me sleep and keep the juices flowing, much like those running down your leg. They were also talking about it on the news this morning, called it some sort of plague. You should have seen those two running from the studio as if their lives depended on it. They need to do that more often, might liven up the show."

As always he ignored most of her commentary, except for the few facts that ran through Holtz's brain, and that was Gladys for once in her ever loving lunatic mind, might actually know something of use.

"How do we get rid of it? I still have a game to finish." How in the Great Blue Balls of Fire was he going to get this thing off his leg? He shuddered at actually touching it, bad enough it was touching him.

"Well in the movies, decapitation or a shot to the head works. Use one of your irons. I'm sure that would do the trick." The crazy old bat wandered to the front of the cart, staring down at the gaping, moaning orifice, studying it scientifically in her atrocious floral nightgown.

"If you think I'm using one of my new clubs on that thing, you're more insane than I thought you were." A final kick had his ankle free. Now to just free his baby of the nasty specimen under her wheels. Faster than even thought possible Holtz was back on his feet. Was it possible to have do over days, if so, he really wanted one?

"You'd better hurry, Harry. Where you see one zombie, at least twenty others are following. You can run, barricade yourself in a house, but they keep coming. All you're accomplishing is sealing you into your own doom. They still get you sooner or later." Gladys cackled with glee as the zombie gnashed his decaying jaw at her.

The crazy, old bat had the audacity and gall to poke at the creature's wiggling bare feet under his wheels and clack her false teeth at him. Any other day, he might have gotten a good laugh out of the sight, but not while the grotesque, oozing creature was stuck under his baby. Wearily, wiping the sweat off his brow and shaking it at the same time, he groaned. Why Gladys, and why today of all days?

Eyes coming back down from their skyward look to Heaven for patience, kindness, and testicular fortitude, Holtz stared in horror as a movement caught his eye fifty yards away. Upright and shuffling was another zombie. Leaning heavily on a twisted ankle, its knee popped up and down, making better time than Gladys on a good day.

“See I told you. We will need to make a run for it. How much does this baby do on the open road?” The gnarled hand, patting his baby affectionately, was too much. Leaping to his feet, he pushed past Gladys, kicking the zombie in the face with a sickening pop to his cleat.

“About thirty-five, crazy fool. Well don’t just stand there, get in.” As much of a fop as he was, he was still a man with manners. He wasn’t about to leave any woman to be eaten by a zombie, even Gladys Cravitz, the bane of his existence.

The zombie was closing in on them just as another sound was heard, this one at thirty paces behind them. Struggling to get into the cart, Holtz lost his patience with his passenger.

Stepping out and onto a squishy head, his cleats dug into the rotting corpse below. Within two steps accompanied by a dithering busybody, he forced her into the front seat.

“Don’t forget my walker, Harry. As much of an Errol Flynn as you are, I will need it later.” The insane, old idiot was fanning herself with a pristine white hanky and looking up at him adoringly through bug eyes.

Not stopping to fold it, Holtz shoved the offending thing into her hands and hopped into the cart.

“Put the pedal to the metal, Harry. I do believe we’re being surrounded.” Two more zombies popped into view.

“Hang onto your bunnies, Gladys.”

Shifting the small engine into reverse, and gunning it, they sailed backward with a jolt down the spine of the zombie, leaving muddy tire prints in their wake. With a crank to the left, and to open air, Holtz floored his baby as fast as she could go. At least at thirty-five, he could outrun the quickly swarming group.

The pro shop would know what to do, and who to call to rid the green of the hideous creatures, they took care of alligators after all. Paradise Acres was nothing if not about keeping the place cleared of riffraff, though did zombies count among the riffs or the raff? He didn’t care as long as he got in his prerequisite birthday game of golf.

The fourth through the fifteenth hole flew by him, blessedly zombie free. Gladys kept the score, diligently, though her changing the station to polka was almost the last straw. Who could concentrate with a fast accordion version of “Paint It Black”? He would rather not find out the answer to that question. Though more zombies were beginning to track their scent. Each hole became increasingly quicker until he felt as if he was playing a round of putter golf instead of the biggest game of his life.

With a hard jerk on the cart’s brakes, he got out, grabbing a driver. He’d be darned if he didn’t get what holes in he could along the way.

Behind him he heard the moaning, groaning and shuffling of feet draw nearer. With a mighty swing the ball flew. Wasting no time in even looking to see where the ball went, Holtz felt in his gut that the swing was true and headed down the fairway.

“Just what are you doing, you old goat. You’re going to get us eaten alive. I’m too pretty to be a zombie.” Gladys pulled on his arm as he stopped a few feet from his ball.

“Woman, I am not missing the game of my life because some ruddy creatures are shuffling after us. I am going to finish through, if it kills me.” Another club and stroke had the ball on the green, just feet from the tee. Pulling out a putter he tapped the ball. It rolled smoothly, perfectly into the hole to add another one under par to the score.

“Harry! You’d better hurry.” Gladys was pushing at a mawing, moaning, struggling zombie with her walker. She didn’t have the strength to fully fight him off.

As much as he hated Gladys, he wasn’t about to let her get bit by a corpseified flesh eater.

“Hey, get away from her.” Swinging, he hit hard as if with a wedge, the putter whacking up and into the soft mass of tissue, bone and brain. The putter pulled back with a sickening slurp of ooze, slime and bits of rotted brain.

“Get em’ Harry, bash his brains in.” Up and down the crazy woman bounced, those damn slippers flailing frantically.

From the tree line, five more zombies were coming in. These faster than the other, obviously the freshest of the bunch. More human than dead, it wouldn’t take them long before the small cart was surrounded and they were goners.

The disgusting, gory club landed in the back seat with a plop, staining the leather. Damn it. At least his game was going well today. Gladys cackled with glee as she held onto the handle of the cart. Bumping up and down hard over the hills of the green, for a brief moment they caught air.

Turning, looking at each other, and Gladys with those horrible bouncy bunny slippers, Holtz screamed, once and again as both turned looked at each other, yelling before the small wheels found purchase with a deadly lurch. Skidding sideways along the green, blowing bits of grass and mud into the air, the cart came to a shuddering stop and a slide with a perfect lineup for the Sixteenth tee. Hot damn, he just might get to finish his game after all.

Setting up for the tee, Gladys’ raucous polka playing a little too loudly, he almost missed his first swing. A little more motion, with more follow through and he would have missed the shot.

Where the beast came from there was no sign, but Holtz was, again with a zombie trying to gnaw at his ankle. Luckily for him the atrocious, one armed, revolting thing was

lying on its back and gaping at clouds, its entrails drying and trailing behind like bright red ribbons in the Miami sun.

Tugging and pulling, one step after another, the shot was set up. With a small adjustment for the weight of offending the undead, he let the ball soar. Holy Smokes. In one shot he was on the green on a par five course. The extra weight was the advantage for his downswing.

Zombie, still attached Holtz got back into the cart. Putting it in gear, they were off and coming upon the next green, where if he was lucky he could make it in two, at the most three. The score already surpassed his personal best of a 62, with the Stableford system. A few more great shots and this game was his.

With a zombie fully attached to his legs like an extra appendage, Holtz slid the offending limb through the grass and back up into the cart. At twenty mph the zombie began rolling back and forth, churning with the grass and dirt as the cart rolled onto the next shot.

With a bump and a tumble combined with a pop like a fleshy bubble wrap, the body was gone, leaving behind a pulsating hand that refused to let go. Couldn't the thing have lasted a little longer, darn bugger added something to his swing?

The seventeenth tee was blessedly free of zombies and Gladys was taking a slight snooze. One under par. It wasn't bad, but sure as heck wasn't brilliant. That damned zombie really added something to his swing. One second left him wondering if he could find another one some place. Shaking the disturbing images of hunting down a zombie for additional weight, Holtz put the putter back in the bag. Insano-Woman was snoring softly in her sleep mumbling "Get em' Harry" and twitching slightly.

A smile, honest to goodness, a smile, broke out on his face as Holtz stared at his nosy neighbor. Just sitting here quietly like this wasn't so bad, it was actually nice having someone ride with him for a change, even if she did like a horrendous polka and spouted off random horror movie facts. Gladys wasn't so bad once he got used to her. There was no way that he was doing this on a daily basis, but maybe once in awhile they could. Oh my stars and garters! What in the world was he thinking, him and Gladys Cravitz friends, as in buddies? Zombies take me now.

"Freddy killed Michael Meyers." Gladys snorted and woke up disoriented as Holtz took off toward the final hill, and the last tee. The noon day sun was beginning to blaze hot and smoldering overhead, and the smell of rotten flesh burning his nose from the hand still attached to his ankle.

Cresting the top of the hill overlooking the eighteenth and final hole, he stopped the cart. Slowly, mouths opened, and with eyes aghast, Holtz and Gladys turned and looked at each other, mentally shaking their heads. Below, surrounding the tee, three zombies swayed.

At the hole, at least ten zombies were shuffling, murmuring, and dying for breakfast, on in their case undying for pieces of sweet Holtz and Gladys flesh.

“What are we going to do, Harry?” For the first time this morning, Gladys’ eyes held fear and it bothered him. Grabbing her wrinkled, gnarled hand briefly, he squeezed and gave it a pat.

Studying the layout, Holtz knew there was only one way of getting to that tee, and to the hole. With the engine still rumbling, he got out, pried the lifeless hand from his ankle and chucked it. To the front of the cart he walked, running his hand along the shining, beautiful fiber glass. Over every curvature and indentation, caressing his baby. Bending down to the grill and placing one hand on the hood, and other on his heart, Holtz asked for forgiveness.

“We’ve been through a lot sweetheart. For a long time, it’s been just you and I. I hate to do this to you. If there was any other way, you know I’d do it. I need you to be here for me. Can you do it? Can we beat those flesh-eaters back into the ground where they belong? Good, that’s a girl. Now we’re going to do this my way, and I need you to give me all you’ve got. You’ve been a good girl, and you will not be forgotten. This I promise.” Placing a kiss on the hood of Hell on Wheels, he felt marginally better, and ready to kick more zombie ass.

“Hang onto your bunnies, and use that walker if you have to. We’re going to make this quick, and for heaven sake, don’t leave without me, or I swear I’ll come back and haunt you.”

The affable woman blushed and giggled, turning to hide her eyes. Give me a break, like those bug eyes were so sweet and innocent, maybe sixty years ago.

“Buckle up, Gladys, things are about to get bumpy.”

Barely giving the old girl time to adjust and fasten, Hell on Wheels was flying down the hill and straight into the zombies surrounding the tee. One smashed into the left side and was flung away. Two went for the left and was rammed with a walker to the face, pushing him away and over. Three was thrust with such force that he went ass over tea kettle, flying over their heads to land with a thud behind the cart.

Moving like he hadn’t in twenty years, Holtz grabbed a driver, a ball, and a tee. Setting the tee and ball, zombies getting up and coming closer, he wasted no time to even gauge the wind velocity. Fly, baby, fly.

Two zombies attacked from either side, determined to fight over his tasty bits. Damn it. Swinging away with the \$400 club, he sent one zombie sprawling with a direct hit between the eyes. The other was met with a hard blow to the head. Both were out for the count. Take that death breath.

With only a second to spare, Holtz watched a miracle being performed. Down went the ball. Grimacing he watched the ball lower, lower, and then bounce. Off a head, then shoulder, another head, ping-ponging between the zombies. Floating in midair, the ball

seemed to hover before hitting the ground and rolling, two feet, one foot, into the hole with a slight pinball reverberation. Hole-in-one.

“Woo-Hoo! Gladys, I did it. I shot a 70.” Doing a little disco dance, Holtz spun and turned to stare at a battered golf cart and a gleaming nosy bat. Today was the best day of his life.

“What do you say, we head to the pro shop and warn them, then let me treat you to lunch?” Heck, maybe add dinner too if the day gets any better. He really could get used to living a little outside the realm of golf.

“In earlier Miami news this morning, zombies were spotted on the green at Paradise Acres. We take you live to the scene.”

“Good afternoon, Miami, this is Kristen Thomas, in for Tom. I’m standing here in front of Paradise Acres’ Golf Pro Shop with Gladys Cravitz and Harry Farfromover. Just this morning these old geezers . . . err retirees were earlier attacked by twenty viscous zombies. Gladys, let us hear from you first.”

“Oh, Harry wasn’t scared at all, a regular Valentino. He hopped around a bit, but we zoomed away before any real trouble happened, a shame really. He took that one out good, with this baby.” Gladys lovingly petted the shining top of “Hell on Wheels.”

“Mr. Farfegnugen, could you describe your escape to us.”

“It’s Fargenfutter, Holtz Fargenfutter.”

“We’ll let you know more about this incredible story on the noon edition.”

The woman just cut him off, of all the gall. Sighing loudly and brushing away from the impending crowd he sat with a hiss on the hot, leather seat, and started the puttering engine.

“So. Where to Harry? Want to go grab my binoculars and see if we can find any more zombies. I bet there are swarms of them out there now.” The cart dipped as he groaned when his passenger situated herself on the seat.

“My name is Holtz, Gladys, H-O-L-T-Z.” At least he could take her home, then be done with her.

“Nope, still like Harry better. You’re more like a Dirty Harry, now. Come on. We’ve got zombies to chase. How many do you think we can take out with this baby?” A fuzzy bobbling head stomped on the floor board as Gladys turned to hang on for dear life.

Groaning, but catching the gleam in her eye through the glass bottle spectacles, Holtz for once decided to live a little. If only for the sake of one day of insanity.

“Oh, I’d say at least ten or so. What do you say, Old Girl? And for now, I’m picking the music.”

Turning on the cart's small stereo and hitting a few buttons for the track then cranking it as the only song to perfectly fit the mood came over the speakers. With as much peel-out as he could give it, they were gone to the tune of AC/DC's "Highway to Hell."

Flying over the green, two old fools were out to live a little and take out some zombies along the way. Who said all that retirees did were golf, play bridge and gossip? They had creatures to slay.

Later that evening, just as the sun was beginning to set on Paradise Acres, and the mosquitoes were coming out to feast en masse, Holtz and Gladys sat amidst her plastic pink flamingoes and cracking bug zapper, sharing tall cool glasses of iced tea. They listened to the news report as they watched the bonfire in front of them.

Hell on Wheels was living up to its name. The small cart was engulfed in flames, parts of zombies, and unmentionable fluids darkening the craft like splattered bugs on a highway. She'd taken a hit to the undercarriage when a particularly nasty bugger's spiked biker collar caught the gas tank, and threw sparks. With barely enough time to get Gladys and himself off, before his baby blew, Holtz valiantly, with nine-iron in hand, fought the remaining zombie with a blow to the temple, and a spray of thick putrid fluid.

"This is Sharon Stormer reporting for the evening news. Fellow Miami and Floridians, we have reason to rejoice. The CDC has just announced that a cure has been found and will be administered to all drinking water immediately and on a national scale. Unfortunately, there is no cure for those already taken by the plague and we say goodbye to our fellow men here in the studio. Tom, Brick, and Tony, may you rest in peace. Good night Miami, and may you have a pleasant tomorrow."

Over his glass Holtz caught Gladys, with her coke-bottle glasses off, her eyes twinkled in the last of the dying light. It was a hell of a day, possibly the best of his life. Golf was nothing compared with whacking a zombie's head fifty yards into the wind. Gladys wasn't all that bad either, just a little rough and kooky around the edges. Perhaps she was growing on him. Nah.

After a goodnight to Gladys, Holtz made his way home. Once shiny and pristine, his misused and abused cleats make a clink on the concrete with every step. His pants were stained with chemically enhanced grass and only God knew what fluid and substances covered his weary body. Whistling another AC/DC tune as the sun fell from the sky and narrowly missed the massive zombie-infected mosquito as he shut his door and clicked the locks into place. Maybe tomorrow he'd get in a round of golf, though he doubted he'd ever look at the sport the same again. It really was too bad about his girl, at least Hell on Wheels went out with a blaze of glory, the only way to go.